

The Director  
Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

22 July 1977

Ms. Susanne Methven  
President  
Student Government Association  
Hollins College  
Roanoke, Virginia 24020

Dear Ms. Methven:

A friend of mine whose daughter is entering Hollins College this September as a freshman sent me a copy of your June letter to new students. I was impressed especially by your ambitious and worthwhile orientation program. The fact that you ask incoming students to read and be prepared to discuss seven books before coming to college is a true indicator of the serious intellectual philosophy of Hollins College.

I was, of course, interested that the CIA is the subject of two of the books that you recommend. I would note, however, that both books you single out express strong opinions against the CIA. If you agree that the hallmark of a first-quality academic undertaking is to ensure that all sides of an issue are aired and thoroughly discussed, I think it would be helpful if your new students could read something that presented the other side of the case. As in almost all disputations, there is another side. Several books that might balance your bibliography include: Secrets, Spies and Scholars, by Ray S. Cline; The Night Watch, by David Aflee Phillips; or The CIA's Secret Operations, by Harry Rositzke.

Your proposed questions also tend to infer a predisposition to one side of the issue. I would suggest that some balance and a more positive and constructive discussion might be encouraged with questions like:

1. What should be the role of the CIA in the affairs of the United States Government?
2. Is there a place for secrecy in an open society?  
How best can it be achieved without incurring abuses?
3. Do intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination contribute to a free society? What is the nature of that contribution?

At the same time, I recognize that at this late date it is unlikely you could amend your list of books or your questions or that the new students would have time to read still another book or two. To correct this imbalance, if you think it would be helpful for a representative of the CIA to participate in your discussions or be available to answer questions I would be happy to ask one of our people to contact you. I leave that up to you.

In sum, I encourage your stimulating undertaking. An open and full debate on all aspects of American government is, in my mind, the best way to understand the process of government and to develop those criteria which we can use to judge the merits of any governmental action or agency.

Yours sincerely,

  
STANSFIELD TURNER

cc: President, Hollins College